

## California and Western Medicine

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## EDITORIALS\*

### HAS MODERN-DAY UNREST AND PUBLICITY INDUCED SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, LEGALLY OR ILLEGALLY, TO ENGAGE IN STATE MEDICINE?

*Whither Is the World Drifting?*—A large proportion of thinking people are nowadays asking themselves whither the world is drifting. For everywhere there seems to be more or less unrest, associated on the one hand with disturbed social and economic conditions, and on the other with the insistence by one section of the population that the remaining portion of the people shall live according to the laws and mandates which come from legislative or propagandist sources. The picture varies with continents, races and nations, but at the present time none of these but have their troubles.

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*The Place of the Healing Art Profession in this Whirlpool of Unrest.*—In this whirlpool of unrest, so old and placid a guild as that of the healing art, is also having its greater and lesser difficulties. It is generally conceded that the practice of medicine is individualistic and that mass production in medicine can only lead to mediocre medical service. In our own country the problems of the medical profession are made more

\* Editorials on subjects of scientific and clinical interest, contributed by members of the California Medical Association, are printed in the Medicine Today column which follows.

difficult because the phenomenal material progress of the United States during the last several decades seems to have been more or less dependent upon a centralization of resources and power, with mass production as the outstanding result to be secured thereby. This new era has brought to the fore groups of lay leaders who through their own great success in the business and manufacturing worlds have come to believe that the same procedures which brought them their personal successes could be made to apply in most all other lines of human endeavor.

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*The Recent Outburst of Mr. Henry Ford.*—Such leaders are not reluctant in pushing forward their views. Witness, for instance, that esteemed automotive representative, Mr. Henry Ford, who in recent years seems to have had no hesitancy in lecturing the medical and other professions and businesses, even though his actual knowledge of their work and responsibilities, in more instances than one, might perhaps best be represented by a large or relative zero. Unfortunately, many of his statements will be accepted as proven facts by those of the laity who have neither the inclination nor the time to investigate and to determine whether or not Mr. Ford's viewpoints were correct or not.

Henry Ford's recent interview about the medical profession and its delinquencies was quite a newspaper feature story and received much publicity in lay publications. (See editorial in CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, July, 1929, page 59.) The newspapers which published that syndicated article naturally did not put forward later on the contradictory facts which would have shown that Mr. Ford was in error in much of what he thought and said. The end result of that interview was the acceptance of Mr. Ford's opinions by a large number of the lay public. With such publicity conditions obtaining, it is not to be wondered at that a considerable group of lay writers, who by the use of their pens earn their bread and butter, also should have seized upon different phases of statements made by Mr. Ford and others to further exploit and accentuate the viewpoints which had been brought forward.

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*The Medical Profession Will Continue to Carry On in Service.*—Fortunately for the world, the rank and file of the medical profession are little disturbed by such outbursts. Members of the medical profession everywhere will continue to give service to their lay fellows in the light of the best knowledge at hand, and will unostentatiously carry on in their efforts to prevent diseases and to ameliorate and cure diseases.

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*What of the Future Outlook?*—If the conditions above noted showed no further variations, all would be well, and there would be little need for worry, since history has established that in

good time all false prophets are discovered and that the propaganda of such is eventually discarded.

Unfortunately, however, the world is moving so fast in its present unsettled state, and so many of those in temporary authority in civic and other human activities are so satisfied with their personal viewpoints, that they show no hesitancy in trying to put into practice some of their theories on problems which they have deluded themselves into thinking they have solved. All of which brings us to an example of an attempt to put into practice a theory which involves the practice of medicine, and which experiment is taking place before our eyes in California at the present moment.

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*Santa Barbara County Supervisors Inaugurate State Support of Hospitalization of Private Citizens.*—Here in California, down in Santa Barbara County, we are having the opportunity of witnessing an experiment in which public moneys from taxation sources are seemingly being used by the county board of supervisors in a non-public function, in that these public officials are offering to non-indigent citizens of Santa Barbara County hospitalization at "rates less than cost." Perhaps the honorable supervisors who passed an ordinance or rule permitting themselves to do this will pass an ordinance giving themselves the right to spend public moneys to supply non-indigent citizens with clothing, shoes, bread and foodstuffs also at "rates less than cost"! The expenditure of public moneys would certainly seem to be as proper for these latter needs just mentioned as for the provision of hospitalization facilities for private, non-indigent citizens. From the legal standpoint, such allocations and expenditure of public funds would seemingly be as sound in the one instance as in the other.

The editor is not a lawyer, but he believes that the board of supervisors of Santa Barbara County, in taking the action they did in providing certain hospitalization provisions for private, non-indigent or non-pauper citizens, could very properly be brought before the courts to show on what authority in the basic law of the constitution of California, some of their expenditures in hospitalization experiments were being made. The state constitution gives the county units the right to maintain county hospitals and to support the same through public funds, but it is also our impression that it is provided that such facilities shall be extended only to indigent citizens. It will be interesting to watch the outcome of the experiment in Santa Barbara County in this—what might be called an initial experiment in state medicine in California. It is true that at the present time the experiment is only a small beginning, but the legal and other principles involved are not small. The importance of this strange departure in Santa Barbara County, both for the todays and the tomorrows, must be evident to all physicians in California. For the time being, members of the Santa Barbara County

Medical Society are of course especially involved and will no doubt give this new problem which has arisen in their own county their earnest consideration. For action of the Santa Barbara Society on some of these matters, see report of that society in this number of CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, pages 130 and 131.

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*The Letter which the County Supervisors Issued to Santa Barbara County Citizens.*—The letter which was sent out by Mr. C. L. Preisker, chairman of the board of supervisors of Santa Barbara County, is very interesting. Because of its importance the copy which has come to the editor will be reproduced in part below. The editor has taken the liberty to italicize several sentences. Members of the California Medical Association are urged to read and ponder on these quotations, which follow:

The County of Santa Barbara is offering its employees and their families hospital, ambulance, x-ray, medicine, dressing, laboratory service, and everything that can be furnished at Santa Maria Hospital at the following rates:

1. Persons earning less than \$125 per month, 50 cents per person per month and not over \$1.50 per month per family.

2. Persons earning \$125 per month and less than \$200 per month, 75 cents per person per month and not over \$2.25 per month per family.

3. Persons earning \$200 or more per month, \$1 per person per month and not over \$3 per month per family.

This service includes hospital service for operations, maternity cases, accidents, and also includes services for accidents and illness starting the month after leaving county employ, unless the person is discharged for a cause. . . .

For the county to lose a minimum, it must not only get its patients well as soon as possible, but must keep them well. *The rates are less than cost, and are based on the ability of the person to pay, as hospitalization is coming to be looked upon somewhat as a public function.* . . .

*This service is open to groups such as teachers, employees of different business houses or corporations, unions, or any logical group applying for the same where ten or more apply, at five per cent higher charge or rate than the above schedule. It is also open to individuals, but the county reserves the right during the first year to refuse hospital service for operations and treatment for very apparent chronic ailments existing at the time the individual applies. It would not be fair to the county for \$1 per month to take on an individual sick person who immediately needs a very expensive operation or treatment.* . . .

*An attempt is being made to make arrangements with various doctors in the community to furnish complete medical and surgical service at a fixed monthly charge.*

*This is insurance against large bills for sickness.*

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*Query for Members of the California Medical Association.*—Each member of the California Medical Association might well ask himself what he thinks of all this and what he thinks should be done in these premises. Members of the Association and its county medical societies are urged not to be backward in sending in their suggestions to the central office of the Association. The Council of the California Medical Association will then be in better position to decide on its course of action.